



# USAID | CAMBODIA

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## BACKGROUND

USAID has provided over \$29.7 million since 2003 to support improved good governance in Cambodia. The underlying democracy and governance challenges in Cambodia are: weak government institutions; selective application of the rule of law; rampant corruption; suppression of competing political voices; growing self-censorship of media; and active intimidation of civil society leaders. USAID Cambodia's strategy over the next five years is focused on improving political and economic governance in Cambodia. One of six program components to help accomplish this objective is to "Support Democratic Local Governance and Decentralization." This will include support to the political process during and between elections.

## PARTNERS

**International Republic Institute (IRI)** – \$7 million (September 2003 - September 2006). IRI works to: improve governance at the Commune Council level; strengthen the opposition Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) through promoting internal democracy and decentralized and shared decision making process; promote civil and political rights thru the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR); and broaden youth participation in political life thru the Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC).

**National Democratic Institute (NDI)** – \$4.5 million (September 2003 - September 2006). NDI works to: support women's leadership and youth leadership caucuses; promote the development of women's and youth wings in all major political parties; enhance integrity in political parties; increase access to the media for parties and civil society; promote constituency dialogues with members of parliament; and monitoring parliament through Parliament Watch activities.

**PACT Inc.** – Local Administration and Reform Program (LAAR) \$14.4 million (October 2005 – September 2010). The program works to promote and enhance democratic local governance, with a main focus at the commune level.

The project will cover 500 communes/sangkats in ten provinces and will include a Social Development Fund for Commune projects. Critical themes of the program are:

- Increased citizen participation in decentralization and deconcentration reform;
- Strengthen Commune Council transparency, accountability and partnership; and
- Improve awareness of gender, youth and natural resource management issues with the Commune.

## RESULTS TO DATE

- Despite the absence of its leader from the country, the Sam Rainsy Party continues constructive internal reform supported by IRI and NDI. In May 2005 SRP's Steering Committee unanimously endorsed the internal reform agenda: establishing a membership list for the party; introducing internal party election procedures; training and deploying trainers to deliver awareness campaign of the reforms; conducting a rolling internal election at the Village level (completed by June 2006), Commune (August 2006), District (October 2006) and provincial level (December 2006); and holding national party elections following the endorsement of the National Party Congress.
- To date, IRI and NDI trained SRP volunteers have conducted awareness campaign in nine of the 22 provinces. Of the 12,000 villages in Cambodia, registration has begun in 850 villages, of which 132 have completed the process and held village elections. Approximately 50,000 party members have been registered to date.
- IRI supported the Cambodian Center for Human Rights to conduct 119 public forums that reached approximately 70,000 citizens and stimulated public discussion on local human rights issues and matters affecting local communities. CCHR has Community Focal Points in each of their areas of operation who help follow-up and encourage local action on issues raised during the public forums.
- CCHR continues to broadcast *Voice of Democracy (VOD)* radio on FM 105 where human rights issues are raised and discussed. CCHR is now in discussion with another radio, which has a greater reach in term of broadcasting capacity for its Voice of Democracy.
- Over the past year, NDI conducted over 60 constituency dialogues in 8 provinces, most of which were recorded and broadcast on radio. Examples of actions taken following the dialogues are: the construction of dams, pathways, wells and 1,000 meters of canal in Prey Veng; the reinstatement of compensation and back-pay for teachers in rural schools in Siem Reap; a police crackdown on drug-trafficking in Banteay Meanchey and youth gangs in Batambang; and return of private property in Banteay Meanchey.
- In October 2005 Pact has initiated start-up operations for the new LAAR program.

## DEMOCRATIC LOCAL GOVERNANCE & DECENTRALIZATION